Research and Publishing Program Report, June 2025

By Dedra McDonald Birzer, Director

SDHS Press

SDHS Press was thrilled to accept the prestigious Western Writers of America Spur Award for Best Western Children’s Picture Book for our 2024 children’s publication, *Georgia Jipp: Blizzard Pilot* at the Spur Awards banquet held 22 June 2025 in Amarillo, Texas, at the organization’s annual meeting. *Georgia Jipp*, written by Laura Beth Dean and illustrated by Jeanne Bowman, was also named a finalist for the Will Rogers Medallion Award and was awarded a bronze medal for Best Illustrator in the 2024 Moonbeam Children’s Book Awards. Another 2024 award-winning publication is *A Phantom Storm: Sitting Bull, America, and the Ghost Dance* by Norman E. Matteoni, which won the Little Bighorn Historical Association’s John M. Carroll Award for best 2024 book on “Custer and His Times.” *A Phantom Storm* is also a finalist for the Will Rogers Medallion Award.

In early July, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Legacy and Research Association will honor SDHS Press founder and emeritus director Nancy Tystad Koupal with its Legacy Award. Koupal will receive this award at the biannual Laurapalooza conference, held in Sioux Falls, at which Dedra Birzer and Ben Jones will give presentations. Laurapalooza is also the site of SDHS Press’s July 8 release of *Wilder Weather: What Laura Ingalls Wilder Teaches Us about the Weather, Climate, and Protecting What we Cherish* by Barbara Boustead. In *Wilder Weather*, Boustead employs her doctoral training as a meteorologist to explain the many weather events in Wilder’s Little House books. She also examines historical weather records to determine which events took place as Wilder described them.

Other new book releases for 2025 include “Around the Belt,” the third of David Wolff’s planned six-volume Black Hills History Tours series. SDHS Press is also excited to publish “Sacred Places,” the memoir of South Dakota literary marvel Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve as well as a history of the White River Badlands by Philip Hall. These three books will be released in September.

Two new children’s picture books will also be released in September. First, “Badger Clark: Poetry Wrangler,” written by Nancy Bo Flood and illustrated by Jeanne Bowman, is a delightful biography of the South Dakota poet laureate and cowboy poet. Second, “Halhata na Thathanka/Magpie and Buffalo” is SDHS Press’s first board book. Written and illustrated by Alfreda Beartrack Algeo, this board book for pre-readers will appear in two versions, one in English with Lakota names for bison parts and one completely in Lakota. Violet Catches is working on the Lakota translations. Having all of these books in hand in time for the South Dakota Festival of Books in late September is our goal.

*South Dakota History*

The summer issue of *South Dakota History* will be mailed to SDSHS members on June 27. It includes a journal-length article on the 1968 Republican campaign train that traversed the state, staffed by Teen Age Republicans (known as TARS). In this article, titled “The Train is Coming”: The 1968 *Victory Special*, the Last Campaign Train across South Dakota,” author Terry C. Anderson recounts his work and memorable moments as a TAR on the campaign train.

Work on the fall issue of *South Dakota History* has begun in earnest. It will feature articles by Cindy Wilson and Nancy Tystad Koupal on topics related to Laura Ingalls Wilder.

*History Notes* newsletter

Articles for the spring/summer issue of the *History Notes* newsletter are due to Research and Publishing staff on June 30, with files due to the printer two weeks later. The issue will be mailed out to SDSHS members in late July.

Conferences

Summer is filled with conferences for Research and Publishing staff. Dedra Birzer attended the South Dakota Department of Education literacy conference in early June, the Western Writers of America conference June 18-22, and will attend Laurapalooza in early July. Craig Walters will attend the Norwegian Daughters of America conference in Sioux Falls in mid-July.

History Talks

The monthly History Talks virtual author series continues to be well attended. May featured children’s book author and illustrator, S. D. Nelson. For June’s session, USD professor emeritus Istvan Gombocz provided an overview of the German-American press in South Dakota. July’s program will highlight Barb Boustead and her newly published *Wilder Weather* book.